

**Minutes of the meeting of Pulford V.A. Lower School Governors held
on Thursday 9th February 2017 at the school**

1	Registration	ACTION
	<p>Present: Mr D Heather (DH) (HT), Mrs S Marchant (SM), Mrs T Rees (TR), Mr G Hargreaves (GH) (Chair), Mrs R Pickering (RP), Mr J Chadwick (JC), Mr P Whittington (PW), Canon G Fellows (GF), Mr A Brandham (AB), Mrs Beci Morley (BM), Mr Ed Senior (ES), Mrs Emma Birtles (EB),</p> <p>Mrs Jane Smith (Clerk).</p> <p>The meeting commenced with prayers led by GF.</p>	
	<p>Authorised absence</p> <p>Dr S Burge (SB), Mr S Arya (SA)</p>	
2	<p>Declaration of Pecuniary interests</p> <p>None declared</p>	
3	<p>Matters arising from the previous meeting</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 13th October 2016 had been circulated prior to the meeting. Governors confirmed they had read the DFE Guidance on Keeping Children Safe in Education update The minutes were approved as a true record and signed by the chair.</p>	
4	<p>Chair's report</p> <p>The report had been circulated to all Governors prior to the meeting. He confirmed that the new funding proposals have now been published and it is possible to compare former funding arrangements with the new system. It is probable that Pulford will gain financially over the next three years.</p>	
5	<p>HT's report</p> <p>A copy of the HT's report was circulated to all Governors prior to the meeting.</p> <p><u>Extension of Nursery provision</u></p> <p>The HT confirmed that a straw poll of current parents had indicated that the vast majority would wish to take up the option of 30 hours nursery education. This creates a challenge to the school to accommodate the additional children. The HT has spoken to the conservation officer at the council about the possibility of building an extra classroom but he had indicated that he was not keen on the idea. However, AB has met with the town clerk, who has confirmed that there is a sum of money available as a development grant. The HT has also now met with a representative of the Council who have advised that the school would need to provide a costs and feasibility report. They had indicated that it is not inconceivable that such permission would be granted. The HT advised that currently three possible options are being considered by the Senior Leadership team: further development of the Forest School to provide additional indoor/outside teaching areas, a stand-alone classroom or deciding not to offer the additional hours. The latter idea has been rejected as parents could then take their children elsewhere and this would impact on the Early Years admissions. The HT has asked Kingsbury Homes to cost the two other options. He proposed that the Sites & Buildings Committee meet after half term to consider their report and put a proposal to the Pulford Trust. It was agreed that this would be held on 7th March 2017 at 7.30pm. He reported that initial estimates had priced the cost of developing the Forest School at about £50K and the stand alone classroom at £150K – with £50K being potentially available via a Section 106 application. He advised that Early Years staff have also been consulted and are undertaking their own research. It is recognised that the Forest School is cited as a beacon of excellence, but a proper unit may well be the best option in the longer term. Any additional building will need to be unobtrusive and not interfere with tree roots.</p> <p>Governors wondered if it would be possible to have any structure in place by September</p>	S & B CTTEE

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	<p>2017. The HT pointed out that the admissions system means that children would not start at the school until January, and short-term arrangements could be made if building work is not completed by then.</p> <p><u>Attainment data</u></p> <p>It was noted that the half year figures indicate that there should be a significant rise in the number of children achieving a GLD this year. The HT reported that both the teachers had been selected by the Local Authority to undertake additional training to help with guidance on assessment. The HT pointed out that the baseline indicated that they are a stronger cohort this year and staff are still making rather conservative judgements. It is also the case that as the Nursery staff become better acquainted with their role they are preparing the children more thoroughly for the Early Years stage.</p> <p>Governors expressed concern at the weakness in writing. Staff reassured them that children are all given many opportunities to practice writing across the curriculum.</p> <p>The HT reported that the new Maths policy has now been completed by Central Bedfordshire Council. Column addition is now included and having different methods available is beneficial as some children learn better with one system rather than another.</p> <p>Governors queried what action is being taken to tackle the reduction in the percentage of PP children expected to achieve the GLD in EY. The HT advised that the data had had to be adjusted since he compiled his report. He confirmed that a provision map is created to demonstrate how funding is allocated and it was pointed out that the reduction in the percentage is a result in the number of children being eligible decreasing – one child represents a greater percentage.</p> <p>As far as phonics is concerned Governors were reassured that although some of the SEND children remain unlikely to reach the expected target, they are making good progress. It was agreed that the most important issue is that all children are reaching their potential and progress is a more important measure than attainment.</p> <p><u>The SEF</u></p> <p>A copy of the document was circulated to all Governors prior to the meeting. They queried whether there is a SEF for the Early Years. The HT confirmed that as this is an area of focus a document has been produced and he will circulate it to Governors.</p> <p>Governors wondered why, despite having an Outstanding assessment from Ofsted, the school was grading itself as Good. They were concerned that standards are slipping. The HT advised that in his view the school would currently be graded as Good. He pointed out that the recent expansion, introduction of new ways of working and the implementation of the new national curriculum meant that some adjustments have been necessary. He considered that in the next year an Outstanding assessment should be achieved. He reassured Governors that senior staff are working hard on improving writing at KS1 and the performance in EY and all are determined to maintain the Outstanding grade. He considered that only if after three years the school is not working at an Outstanding level, would it be indicative of a problem. He also reminded governors that the recent Scoping audit and external governance review had not detected any areas of concern. There was a discussion on whether, at a strategic level, it is possible to continue to expand the EY and also to maintain the effort needed to reach the Outstanding rating. The HT pointed out that by developing the EY team more children are receiving the benefit of a consistent approach. Admitting more children into the nursery is also beneficial financially and any improvement in the school's budget would make a huge difference to the opportunities available to all children in the long run.</p>	HT
6	Safeguarding	
	<p>The report by EB was circulated to all governors prior to the meeting.</p> <p>RP pointed out that she has not received safer recruitment training. It was agreed that the Chair of Governors will undertake such training to ensure at least two governors are adequately qualified. EB confirmed that the Single Central Record is now accurate – thus responding to the only Safeguarding issue mentioned in the governance review.</p> <p>The Board unanimously approved the transfer of the responsibility for liaison with</p>	GH

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	<p>the LA in event of abuse allegations being made against the HT from GF to GH.</p> <p>EB recommended that all Governors undertake some safeguarding training before the review of the Child Protection Policy in the autumn. It is important that all Governors are well-trained to avoid missing anything.</p> <p>Governors thanked EB for the report and agreed that the format works well.</p>	<p>GH</p> <p>ALL GOVS</p>
7	SEND Report	
	<p>A report was circulated to all Governors prior to the meeting. It confirmed that staff have undertaken lots of training. RP confirmed that the request for assemblies with guest speakers to raise the awareness of disabilities is a suggestion by a parent to help increase the global awareness on disability in general. It was agreed that the School Offer on SEND on the website is not clear enough. Governors were invited to consider ways to improve it for the next meeting.</p>	ALL GOVS
8	Committee Reports	
	<p><u>Appeals and Admissions Committee</u> – This has not met</p> <p><u>Finance and Resources Committee</u> the minutes of the meeting held on 19th January were circulated to all Governors prior to the meeting. PW advised that the greatest expense is the payroll, which accounts for 86% of the budget. He also advised that on current projections the licensed deficit is likely to be cleared in the next financial year, one year ahead of schedule. The insurance to compensate for long-term staff sickness is now beginning to arrive.</p> <p>EB expressed concern that her role as H & S Governor means she is responsible for ensuring that legislation is being followed but the lack of a site agent and her inability to be in the school regularly makes her worried that safety checks are not being carried out that could pre-empt a health and safety risk. The HT assured Governors that there is a robust system in place for undertaking – electrical, water and fire checks on a regular basis.</p> <p>PW thanked the HT and ES for preparing the SFVS well in advance.</p> <p>The Clerk apologised for having released confidential minutes to a staff governor.</p> <p>It was noted that in general the financial data available to Governors is now accurate and reliable. Governors wondered whether some staff should manage their own budgets as they can raise their own orders. The HT agreed and confirmed that the curriculum resources section of the budget may be overhauled by the next budget and KS leaders be allocated their own funds.</p> <p>Governors asked whether the idea of replacing the woodchip with an all-weather pitch using Sports Premium funding breaches the requirement for the funding to be sustainable. The HT pointed out that the funding is used to employ specialist sports coaches to instruct the children, which frees up staff for intervention work with individual children, which he considers to be important. He pointed out that the amount of money received would not cover the cost of the pitch anyway. As far as being sustainable he pointed out that some staff work with the coaches so are receiving additional skills. The coaches also run the Saturday morning football course which culminates in the town Football Festival, a considerable financial bonus to the school as a whole.</p> <p>Governors sought clarification from GF on the Pulford Trust's responsibility for the maintenance of the school building. GF said he thought that a recent review of the Trust's finance had ascertained that if the school is used for education it didn't fall on the Trust to maintain the building. He pointed out that when, early in the 20th century the church transferred the school to the care of the Trust no document regarding a tenancy agreement or a lease was produced. It was understood that the money was to be used for the benefit of the school, either for education or repairs. Maintained schools receive direct funding for maintenance from the LA and the Diocese also has a similar scheme for VA schools. GF will look again at the Trust deed to see if this point is clarified but suggested that maintaining the status quo, which provides for some flexibility by the Trust, may well be the most beneficial solution for the school.</p>	<p>HT</p> <p>GF</p>

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	<p>Governors confirmed receipt of the Finance Manual.</p> <p><u>Standards and Curriculum Committee</u> The minutes of the meeting held on 24th November 2016 were circulated to all Governors prior to the meeting. GH expressed his concern at the standard of handwriting he had witnessed and he indicated that he is keen to monitor the teaching of this. Staff commented that it is a sign of the times that children are no longer adept at holding a pencil when they start school, being used to swiping electronic gadgets. They confirmed that children are given letter formation sheets to work on at home and KS2 children are set writing homework. They also reminded Governors that there are resources on the e-learning platform, such as espresso guidance to support parents.</p> <p>It was confirmed that the cycle of meetings has been altered to coincide with the publication of performance data and that data will now be incorporated into the Committee meeting agenda rather than the HT's report for FGB meetings.</p> <p><u>PR Committee</u> The minutes of the meeting held on 24th November 2016 were circulated to all Governors prior to the meeting. It was agreed that the video is excellent but needs a better link on the website. The HT advised there had been over 100 applications for the 45 places available for this year so far. He replied to Governor's query that the applications are initially vetted by the Office Manager and then verified by him. Any disputes are passed to the Appeals Committee. An exact indication of numbers will not be available until after half term when the out of county and confirmation of some religious criteria applications have been received.</p>	HT
9	Discussion on Strategy	
	<p>The Chair pointed out that now a long period of development is coming to an end, notwithstanding the admission of more nursery children, it was a good opportunity to look at the Board's strategy for the next 3-5 years. He proposed such a discussion be included in all agendas for the time being. This was unanimously agreed.</p> <p>It was agreed that the most important consideration is to maintain the Ofsted Outstanding grade. He then suggested that there are two areas Governors should be focussing on: improving the buildings and improving standards and performance. He said that as "critical friends" they need to bear down in greater detail on the mechanism for data presentation, which needs to be assessed in context. The Curriculum and Standards Committee needs to be confident that they are getting the information they require and are able to analyse it effectively, ensuring the progress and attainment of all groups of children is examined with equal vigour. Whilst recognising that in the future employment will demand high qualifications Governors also felt it is also important to recognise that being creative and adaptable are equally important skills, which enhance the holistic development of every child.</p> <p>It was pointed out that a good starting point would be to consider the School's mission statement. It was recognised that if a child has a good relationship with staff and is happy at school they will progress well. It is also important to consider that the success of the school should not be judged solely by numbers.</p>	CLERK
10	Governor Training	
	RP reminded Governors to let her know when they attend training so she can maintain the log. She advised that upcoming training includes Prevent, Governors' Monitoring visits and Understanding Data.	ALL GOVS
11	Governor visits	
	Although there has not been a formal visit the HT advised that SB has been doing book trawls to support him.	
12	Correspondence	
	None received.	
13	Review new and existing policies	
	The Learning Support Policy for Children with Special Education Needs or Disabilities was circulated to all Governors prior to the meeting. It was accepted without comment .	

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14	Next meeting dates	
	<p>The next meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee will be on 25th April 2017 at 7.30pm to consider the budget.</p> <p>There will be a meeting of the Finance Focus Group on 27th April 2017 at 7.30pm.</p> <p>The PR Committee will meet on Tuesday 2nd May 2017 at 6.30pm.</p> <p>The Standards and Curriculum Committee will meet on Tuesday, 2nd May 2017 at 7.30pm.</p> <p>The next FGB meeting will be on Thursday, 18th May 2017 at 7.30pm.</p>	
15	AOB	
	<p>AB asked whether the school had suffered any damage due to vandalism recently, it being a problem in other parts of the town. The HT confirmed that so far Pulford had not been targeted. AB said the Council now has a mobile CCTV camera.</p> <p>AB also reported that Design Engineering was moving into Chapel Lane.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">There being no other business the meeting ended with The Grace at 21.05</p>	

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